

Press Release for immediate release

Frieze Masters: CONSTANT (1920 – 2005)

The Mayor Gallery, London in collaboration with
BorzoGallery, Amsterdam, Stand D11

12 – 16 October 2022



We are pleased to be participating in this year's Frieze Masters in collaboration with BorzoGallery a retrospective of the Dutch artist Constant (b. 1920 Amsterdam - d. 2005 Utrecht, The Netherlands).

Constant (Constant A. Nieuwenhuys) is one of Holland's most important and innovative artists from the post-war period. He was co-founder of the international CoBrA movement, initiator and inventor of his visionary New Babylon projects in the fifties and sixties, a revolutionary artist in the seventies during the Vietnam war, but also a vibrant, almost romantic colourist in his major late paintings.

After his time as co-founder of the painters' movement CoBrA (1948-1952), in 1952 Constant leaves for London. Here he witnesses the urban development challenges and possible solutions for this war-ravaged city. He meets Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth and Victor Pasmore amongst others, whose influence changes his direction. His London residency remains crucial for his future work in which social architecture plays a key role.

Back in The Netherlands he works with the architects Aldo van Eyck and Gerrit Rietveld. He likewise fosters and maintains his many international contacts, which also include those with the Danish artist Asger Jorn. Constant becomes ever more convinced that a new social and cultural order will advance the cause of humanity. His visionary spirit anticipates that the automation of production will provide mankind with increasing amounts of free time (thereby creating scope for the "Homo Ludens", the man who is playful and creative) and that this futuristic view would become feasible in what, from 1960, is to be known as New Babylon. This vision is what will dominate his oeuvre from that moment on. He creates drawings, models, photo collages, plans, constructions and paintings. In addition, he substantiates New Babylon with numerous written works, talks and lectures in various countries.

The social and political turbulence of the sixties threatens to turn New Babylon into a utopia: the New Babylon project stops in 1974.

Like so many artists worldwide, Constant was deeply affected by the Vietnam war, moving into a more revolutionary and political direction by creating an extraordinary group of collages. Likewise, in the early nineties he makes a series of paintings based on the horrors of the Balkan war.

'Radical Changes' could be Constant's life motto.

Image: Constant, *Observatory*, 1956, Plexiglas and brass, 52 x 48.5 x 48.5 cm, 20 1/2 x 19 1/8 x 19 1/8 inches

High-res images available on request

Opening times:
Monday – Friday, 10 am – 5.30 pm

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